



Proxy, from Montréal, Canada are one of the most hard working and refreshing bands to appear in the world punk scene for many years now. They released a demo tape in early 2012 that earned some great reviews and built a solid reputation for being an exciting and fun band to go see play live. With recent visits to the studio, giving them a refined and tightened sound, they are now ready to finally issue some vinyl output, which is sure to turn heads. A throwback to the classic punk bands of the early '80s both in style and attitude, this is certainly a band to look out for. I decided it was high time to interview them and get some insight into what gives these guys such energy and serves to create such addictive punk rock! The questions were answered by all band members, in late November 2012. Six months on, they are undertaking an extensive tour of Canada and the USA and have just released their eagerly awaited debut LP *Something We've All Seen Before* on *Imminent Destruction* and *Inflammable Material* records. Prolific, determined, and still very much in love with punk, there is much more to come from Proxy in 2013. Interview by Phil O'Grady. Photos by Martin Sorrondeguy and Ben Pepin.

MRR: Please tell me when the band was formed, and if any of the members have played in other bands previously?

Nick: We got together as this complete line up in December of 2011 after months as an incomplete band. Tyler was in a band called H.O.P.E and also plays bass in Truncheons, Skabs was in a band called Kontempt, Chany sang and played guitar in Inepsy and all of us have played in various bands which never released anything. Jody: I have roadied for a Beatles cover band.

MRR: Do all members of the band live close to one another? How often do you find the time to practice or play live?

Nick: Three of us live in a big punk house, which also happens to be where we practice, and the other two live just up the street. We try to practice twice a week. As for shows, we try not to play locally too often, but usually end up playing more often than we ought to.

MRR: How did the creation of the band come about? When and where did you play your first show?

Skabs: Jody, Nick and I had a cover band together and we wanted to keep playing music together. Tyler started playing bass, Chany hung out for a few jams and wanted in, so he jumped on the bass. Tyler moved to guitar.

Jody: I created this band.

Nick: We played our first show in Montreal at Katakombes as a last minute fill in for Jody's other band at the time who were supposed to open for Nomad from NYC. We were unprepared, but turned out to be a pretty good first show. I believe it was sometime in the fall of 2011.

MRR: There are many good bands currently active in Canada. Do you think there is any particular reason for this? In the past, in my ignorance, I only knew about bands like DOA, No Means No and later on bands like Hellbound etc., but Canada seems to be a force in the punk scene right now!

Nick: Well, punk is thriving very well in a lot of areas, many punks move from their shitty little towns when they are young to find like-minded kids in the cities. I guess when you get enough of them in one place there's bound to be some talent mixed in with all the anger. I mean it's always been that way, it probably just stayed under the radar pre internet days.

Tyler: I feel like Canadian punk '77-'82 is the most underrated and overlooked music, next to Australian first wave. Both are recently getting the real attention they deserve from the outside world. Older punks got a Canadian punk history lesson when the Smash the State book and comps following were released, but were, and are still, hard to get a hold of. Labels like Ugly Pop are releasing the gems that I spent a good time looking for, and are easing up my wallet... for now! After '84 Canadian punk got boring, like many other countries. Poorly done hardcore flooded the scene and still pollutes a lot of the country today. My top Canadian punk 7", at the current moment and in no particular order, that everyone should check out are the following!

Modern Minds - Theresa's World (power pop gem, one of the best in the entire genre of power pop)

Modernettes - Teen City 12" and View from the Bottom 12" (heavy hitter power pop rock'n'roll. The music video for "Barba" sums them up nicely)

Bureaucrats - Feel the Pain (fast talented classic first wave punk, with real British accents!)

Fits - Bored of Education (fast paced, with the rager A-side that all high schoolers must listen to)

Viletones - both 7"s (the first true punk band, both mixing art and lifestyle)

Subhumans - both 7"s (often described as Canada's best)

Novels - I'm Being Followed (quirky power pop with a catchy chorus I often find humming to myself when I haven't slept in a while)

Crash 80's - Waiting for the Heat

The Gas - Evacuate Mississauga (Devo-ish punk with a history lesson from Canada!)

Phollop Willing P.A. - Orphan Baby (the first abstract experimental Canadian band, from Halifax of all places, great single!)

Rage - I've Got Your Number (Forgotten Toronto punk that was left of the Smash the State Book, great catchy A-side)

Red Squares - Ottawa Today

Rock'n'roll Bitches - Wild West

Extroverts - Living in Poverty (an anthem for anyone who eats Mr. Noodles more than twice a week)

Platinum Blonde - Hey Hey You (this band went mainstream and seem to try and forget this classic single, and song that mentions giving away smokes are great)

Sturgeons - Punk Rock Virgins (a punk rock virgins anthem, let the memories and the sexual frustration all come back to you)

Government - 331/3 7"

B-Girls - Fun at the Beach (all girl power pop, puts you in a good mood)

Lowlife - Leaders (pre-Personality Crisis, and in my opinion much better. Song about being on acid in a coffee shop, how I can relate! Wow!)

Curtains - Twistin' Up at the Beach

222's - I Love Susan (Montreal's first punk single, the B-side is the winner)

Basics - I Can't Help (wimpy power pop that people would argue for the description)

Culture Shock - Forever (another power pop punker that competes for best in the genre as a whole)

Pointed Sticks - all 7"s (the LP sucks)

Existors - Telex Love

Braineaters - 7" (true outsider punk from BC, with an "all-star" line up)

Simply Saucer - She's A Dog (Hamilton rock punk)

Heartbeats - She Won't Talk (this was cheating from being out in '84, but a catchy tune from Halifax which makes it odd and cool)

...and a whole lot more, but that's just off the top of my head. Not to mention all the classic LPs from the Forgotten Rebels, Diodes and Teenage Head and more, get into it!

Newer bands to look out for are Halifax's Concrete Asylum, fucking insanity '88 UK "britcore" sound, with the nastiest bass tone I've heard since the Ex's El Salvador EP. Diskonnected from Montreal are back at it again after a hiatus, with their unique UK '82/Finnish hardcore sound. Asile from Ottawa have a new LP out, great absolute country of Canada sound, with great non cliché lyrics. These Nodes are one of my favorite new bands. They bring punk back to the no rules roots and play imaginative hardcore, with a Devo vibe. They have a flexi that I would recommend checking out, and catch their exhilarating and unpredictable live show if they are in your town.

Skabs: Yeah there are tons of great active bands around now Spectres, Asile, S.h.i.t. to name a few. Everybody associates Canadian Punk with D.O.A., Subhumans, Dayglo Abortions, but it seems like a lot of great older stuff went under the radar like Personality Crisis, Viletones, Teenage Head, and too many others to mention. Maybe music is more accessible now than it was before.

MRR: Proxy's sound seems to stand out amongst the current trend for "noise" orientated bands which is no bad thing in my book, but is this a conscious decision? Where do you draw your influences from, both musically and lyrically?

Nick: Well, perhaps conscious in the sense that we started this band with the desire to play what we want to play. Noisy bands are fine by me as well, but it just isn't where my heart is musically these days. Lyrically it's hard for me to say where I draw influence from. I'm sure it happens in a subconscious way somewhere, but really I just try to sing around the music the guys write in a way that feels natural.

Jody: I wanted to do something a bit different than what is the current trend, I don't want to play noise-punk and I don't think I could anyways. The noise shows are always fun though and it's good that there are bands playing. I haven't been playing drums for long, so I'm always trying to copy the music I listen to get better. I don't listen to much noise, really. Maybe Chaotic Dischord, but that's not really noise. I learned a whole bunch of Blitz songs with Nick and Skabs, so I'm sure that influenced us. I think we are kind of just seeing what we can come up with that satisfies us. We all contribute to the songs and I think most of our influence comes from daily life, and the music we listen to and each other. Chany grew up next to a mine so that probably has something to do with it...

Skabs: I would say it is a conscious thing. We noticed a lot of bands sounded exactly the same, and we didn't want to be just another noisy band. I think there are some great in that genre, the shows are always fun and I enjoy it, but when I listen to music, it's not that.

We all wanted to play music that we would listen to ourselves. If what we play is what anyone else wants to listen to...that's open to interpretation.

Tyler: I actually got into "noise" music actually before I discovered the sub-genre of "noise punk." An acquaintance whom I use to hunt for roaches and table scores once invited me to his house. He stayed up on ecstasy and made harsh industrial sounds while I looked on astounded. While that one night he tortured my eardrums and changed my perspective on sound, I got the last laugh when he informed me my one stay stunk up his room for three months. A couple years later, he got a room where I lived and we started a band that was a mix of noise punk, jazz and extreme psychedelic improve. (H.O.P.E) (Humans Off Planet Earth)

I find more people get their noise punk influence from the early Japanese great punk hits and less from Cecil Taylor, Spk, Throbbing Gristle, Masonna, Naked City and other boundary pushing, noise makers. The anti-social, true distortion to deafness warriors will stay, while the others will hopefully move along to the horrible hardcore wave and leave us all alone. The people and the bands in the NYC noise punk circle are great! The Montreal New York Connection Volume 2!

MRR: In this part of the world we don't hear much in the media about Canadian politics, how stable is the political and economical climate right now, considering we're all supposedly in some never ending financial crisis going under the guise of "recession"? Tyler: My welfare check has slowly increased over the years so I say on with the recession until the end of employment.

Nick: Economically I couldn't tell you. It's as abstract to me now as it was when I was a kid. I can say I don't see any sudden rise of human suffering around me. It feels like the one's who are most concerned with this "crisis" are the ones who feel entitled to more that they need to begin with or bought into the common lifestyle and are finally seeing it isn't sustainable. There's a category five political shit storm in Quebec right now. The premier got voted out largely for his handling of the student protests; a separatist party replaced him, the mayor of Montreal and many of his pals just got called out by a mafia rat before the court for their involvement with each other. So there's a major shuffle happening here, out with the old shit in with the new shit.

MRR: You recently played at Varning Festival in Montreal with some great bands. How was the festival as a whole and how was the reaction to Proxy?

Skabs: The Varning festival was great this year! Best ever in my opinion—great bands, all around good time. It's a fun fest every year and more people should travel here for it [beginning of November]. I think the reaction to us was great, especially since we're a pretty new band and most of the people probably didn't know who we were.

Tyler: Once upon a time a band called Proxy played at the Katakombes, about 20,000 fans were at the rock concert. The rock jam set was awesome, it really whipped a horse's ass, the crowd roared like a mountain lion. Jody: Varning was real good.

Nick: It was great as a whole. Each night was designated to suit different tastes so each night was uniquely amazing, it was fun to see old friends, make new one's and see a bunch of bands I've been wanting to see for a long time. Fests like that make me retain my love for punk.

MRR: Your demo tape seemed to sell out fast and even though 200 copies were made. Did you find you had a good response to it? What plans do you have recording/release-wise in the future?

Skabs: We sold all the tapes surprisingly fast, but we made another 200, which are still available through us.

Nick: I would say so. I guess I didn't expect them to move so quick. It's good to see people still like tapes! We have a 12" EP due out this winter as a co-release with Imminent Destruction and Inflammable Material labels in the UK. We also have a good stock of new songs we want to record this winter, so perhaps a 7" and another 12" will follow close behind.

MRR: Many bands have the desire to play live as often as possible both at home and in other countries—some bands prefer to stay in the studio. Is touring something that interests you and if so, how practical is it for the band to play outside of Canada?

Skabs: I think we've been playing too much locally. Being five busy people, things are hard to schedule. But we're interested in playing anywhere and hope for small tour(s) in the near future.

Tyler: I like staying at home, but if things are organized and I'm promised pizza, I go.

Jody: Yes! Let's tour. That is the whole point. Start a band, fucking quit your job and go tour...but I want to do another record too.

Nick: Touring is something we all want to do, it's not easy to get the timing right with five people. We are working on it though; a tour in the UK would be fun, nudge nudge!

MRR: Through the use of the internet and social networking sites in particular, everyone seems to have an opinion about what punk is, both positive and negative. What does punk mean to you and how do you view the current scene at home and worldwide?

Nick: Yikes, I guess punk for me is a sanctuary, an escape, a family, a survival mechanism and my ticket to eternal youth! I like the scene at home, people are passionate about their projects and it's far from dull. As for the rest of the world, I hope it's the same.

Tyler: If the original idea of punk saw what punk was now in 2012, it would spit in its face. From what I interpret, punk today would be what punk was against 35 years ago. Everyone plays to please, refrains and even frowns upon experimentation. Rock'n'roll may never die, but jazz will always be the superior genre of music and the classics will stand the time. The internet is only good for cat related things, record related things, annoying people related things and "1 Lunatic 1 Ice Pick" related things.

Chany: Punk rock is a bunch of motherfuckers, nothing, nothing, nothing, but animals.

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